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ABSTRACT

This collection of abstracts is part of a continuing series providing information on recent doctoral dissertations. The nine titles deal with the following topics: (1) the effects of syntactic differences between oral and written discourse on the reading comprehension of second and fifth grade students; (2) the effects of a sentence combining program on the reading comprehension and written composition of fourth grade students; (3) a comparison of the strategies in composition and in reading comprehension of eighth and ninth grade students; (4) structural features used in narrative and expository writing and the relationship of those features to the reading comprehension of children in grades two through six; (5) the relative effectiveness of oral language and written text presentations; (6) syntactic maturity in reading comprehension and writing ability; (7) the relationships among children's awareness of the function of writing, cognitive levels, and reading readiness; (8) the reading comprehension and written composition of reflective and impulsive fourth grade students; and (9) relating reading and writing through a transactional theory of the writing process. (FL)

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Reading and Writing:

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Abstracts of the following dissertations are included in this collection:

Leu, Donald James
THE EFFECTS OF SYNTACTIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ORAL AND WRITTEN DISCOURSE ON THE READING COMPREHENSION OF 2ND AND 5TH GRADE STUDENTS

Mackie, Barbara Crosby
THE EFFECTS OF A SENTENCE-COMBINING PROGRAM ON THE READING COMPREHENSION AND WRITTEN COMPOSITION OF FOURTH-GRADE STUDENTS

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ORAL LANGUAGE AND WRITTEN TEXT PRESENTATIONS: A COMPARISON OF EFFECTIVENESS

Stilley, Mary Jane
AN INVESTIGATION OF SYNTACTIC MATURITY IN READING COMPREHENSION AND WRITING ABILITY

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THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG CHILDREN'S AWARENESS OF THE FUNCTION OF WRITING, COGNITIVE LEVELS, AND READINESS TO READ

Williams-Young, Lois Catherine
A COMPARISON OF THE READING COMPREHENSION AND WRITTEN COMPOSITION OF REFLECTIVE/IMPULSIVE FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS

THE EFFECTS OF SYNTACTIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ORAL AND WRITTEN DISCOURSE ON THE READING COMPREHENSION OF 2ND AND 5TH GRADE STUDENTS

Order No. DA8212011

LEU, DONALD JAMES, PH.D. *University of California, Berkeley*, 1981. 187pp.

This study investigates the possibility that syntactic differences between oral and written discourse interfere with the comprehension of beginning readers. Beginning readers, who have acquired familiarity with linguistic organization through oral language experiences, may formulate expectations about upcoming text based on an inappropriate set of syntactic probabilities. As a result, word recognition errors may appear and comprehension may suffer. The study examines these possibilities.

Twenty-eight second graders and twenty-eight fifth graders orally read versions of stories identical in nature except for the structure of their syntactic patterns. One version contained structures more frequently found in written discourse. The other version lacked these patterns and, instead, used syntactic patterns more typical of oral discourse. A measure of students' familiarity with the syntactic patterns of written discourse was obtained using a story-telling task.

A 2 x 4 x 2 (grade x condition x trial) repeated measures ANOVA indicated that: (1) versions with written discourse structures were significantly more difficult to comprehend than versions without these structures and (2) the interference effect caused by written discourse structures was greatest among 2nd grade students. Separate, multiple linear regression analysis indicated that the interference effect produced by written discourse structures was significantly related to familiarity with these structures at the second grade level but not at the 5th grade level. As familiarity with written discourse structures increased, 2nd graders had higher comprehension scores on versions with written language structures and lower comprehension scores on versions without written language structures.

Oral reading error analysis at written discourse structure locations revealed that students expected syntactic patterns more typical of oral discourse. This effect was stronger among 2nd graders than 5th graders. It was especially strong among those 2nd graders who were least familiar with written discourse structures. Inappropriate expectations, in the form of word recognition errors, interfered substantially with comprehension.

The results suggest that familiarity with the syntactic organization of written discourse is an important step in the acquisition of beginning reading skills. They contradict the common assumption that a beginning reader's previous *oral* language experiences provide a familiarity with linguistic organization sufficient for the efficient processing of *written* language.

THE EFFECTS OF A SENTENCE-COMBINING PROGRAM ON THE READING COMPREHENSION AND WRITTEN COMPOSITION OF FOURTH-GRADE STUDENTS

Order No. DA8207744

MACKIE, BARBARA CROSBY, PH.D. *Hofstra University*, 1982. 262pp.

This study was conducted to determine the effects of a sentence-combining program on the reading comprehension and on the written composition of fourth-grade students when compared with the effects of a program of traditional instruction in written composition.

The underlying assumption was that the sentence-combining program would result in reading and writing scores which would be significantly higher than those for the traditional composition group. Four hypotheses were formulated which were concerned with: (1) reading comprehension as measured by a standardized test (Gates-MacGinitie); (2) reading comprehension as measured by a teacher-made cloze test; (3) syntactic maturity in written composition as measured by the average word length per T-unit; and (4) overall effectiveness of written composition as measured by a holistic scoring procedure.

The subjects were ninety fourth-grade students, approximately twenty in each of five classes, who were attending two elementary schools in a middle-class suburban community in western Nassau County, New York. Assigned to their classes heterogeneously, the subjects were taught by one of five female teachers, three of whom used a sentence-combining program and two of whom used a traditional approach. The investigator prepared specific lesson plans for both programs. Each group received three weekly thirty-minute lessons for a period of twenty weeks (sixty lessons).

Data was collected and analyzed by computing four analyses of covariance using the posttest scores of each measure as dependent variables and the pretest scores of each measure as covariants. Hypotheses were rejected on the basis of group differences equivalent to the .05 level of confidence.

The subjects' scores in the four areas examined revealed that the sentence-combining group (Experimental Group) performed better than the traditional composition group (Control Group) at the .05 level.

The main conclusion drawn from this study was that instruction in sentence combining appears to contribute to achievement in both reading comprehension and written composition. The study emphasizes the importance of providing opportunities for students to examine syntactic options. To this end, sentence-combining instruction may well be a valuable component of a broader reading/writing program at the elementary level.

A COMPARISON OF THE STRATEGIES IN COMPOSITION AND STRATEGIES IN READING COMPREHENSION OF EIGHTH-NINTH GRADE STUDENTS

Order No. DA8206296

O'NEILL, NANCY VAUGHN, PH.D. *University of Georgia*, 1981. 247pp. Director: Ira E. Aaron

A preliminary purpose of this investigation was to determine whether a positive correlation existed between reading and writing performance. A second purpose focused on how the strategies of good and poor readers and of good and poor writers differ before, during and after reading and writing. A third purpose was to examine the responses of readers and writers to determine what commonalities exist in these processes.

The subjects were randomly selected from the ninth grade classes in three high schools in Gwinnett County, Georgia. Twenty Good Readers were selected from the 29 students who made a perfect score on the *Criterion-Referenced Test of Reading* and were rated as Superior readers by classroom teachers; twenty Poor Readers were selected from the 36 students who had mastered 18 or fewer of the objectives on the *Criterion-Referenced Test of Reading* and were rated as below average by their language arts teachers. Twenty Good Writers and 20 Poor Writers were selected from the students who scored one or more standard deviations from the mean on a writing sample.

Individual interviews with each of the subjects in the sample were held in the high schools during school hours using two structured interviews, Strategies for Comprehending and Strategies for Composing, developed for the study.

A moderate correlation of .48 between the reading and writing performance of the students in the study was obtained using Pearson's product moment correlation. Independent t-tests indicated that significant differences existed between the Good Readers and Poor Readers in writing performance and between the Good Writers and Poor Writers in reading performance.

A descriptive analysis of the students' responses to the interview questions indicated that (a) Good Readers were more likely to decide in advance what a selection would be about and to use the print in order to make this decision while Poor Readers were more likely to use the pictures than the print; (b) Good Readers verbalized a strategy for deriving meaning from print as picturing the action or mentally following the sequence of a section while Poor Readers were more likely to make global or general statements; (c) Good Writers appeared more likely to consider the organization, form, and writing techniques as well as subject matter while Poor Writers indicated that getting a topic was their primary concern; (d) Good Writers were more likely to make internal revisions in their compositions while Poor Writers more frequently mentioned proofreading changes during the revision phase.

The responses of students concerning references to the five areas that were reported as common to both reading and writing in the literature indicated that (a) Communication as a purpose of both

reading and writing appeared to be an underlying assumption of all four groups of students; (b) The individuals in all four groups appeared to be effective users of oral language in that they understood the questions, gave logical responses, and verbalized their ideas; (c) Effective reading performance appeared to involve a thinking process in which the reader approaches a selection with questions, looks for information within the print, forms a mental image as he reads, and makes judgments about key points and relationships within the selection; (d) Effective writing performance appeared to involve a thinking process in which the writer organizes the subject matter into some plan before beginning to write, follows a prewriting plan during writing, and restructures and rewords the composition after writing a first draft; (e) Poor Readers and Poor Writers appeared to give more attention to words in reading and to mechanics in writing than Good Readers and Writers did; and (f) Good Readers and Writers exhibited a more active involvement in the reading and writing tasks; however, this strategy appeared to have been learned.

The results suggest the need for further investigation into the thinking processes involved in reading and writing.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES USED IN NARRATIVE AND EXPOSITORY WRITING AND THE RELATIONSHIP OF THOSE STRUCTURAL FEATURES TO THE READING COMPREHENSION OF CHILDREN IN GRADES TWO THROUGH SIX

Order No. DA8205765

REID, JANET MILLS, PH.D. *Georgia State University - College of Education*, 1981. 192pp.

Purpose. The purposes of this study were to investigate use of passage-level structural features in children's narrative and expository writing for developmental patterns and to study the relationships between feature use and comprehension of narrative and expository discourse.

Methods and Procedures. Narrative and expository writing samples were collected from students in grades two through six in three schools in Clayton County, Georgia. Samples were analyzed for the presence of 14 narrative and 6 expository text features. Chi-square Tests of Homogeneity were used to determine if the proportions of use for each feature were significant across grades two through six.

Students completed narrative and expository close passages to measure comprehension. Comprehension scores were correlated with total features used for both narrative and expository discourse. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for each grade for both narrative and expository discourse.

Results. Analysis of narrative features revealed that half the students at each grade named and developed characters, wrote one complete episode, wrote resolutions to plots, and used past tense. Four features, resolution of plot, dialogue, complete episode, and past tense, showed significant differences from second to sixth grade.

In the expository samples, more than half the students named the topic in a title, used a main-idea sentence, followed a plan of passage organization, and used a consistent verb tense. Naming the topic occurred in significantly different proportions in grades two through six.

Comprehension correlated significantly with feature use in third-, fourth-, and sixth-grade narrative discourse and with third- and fourth-grade expository discourse.

Conclusions. Students in this study used many structural features of narrative and expository text in their writing as early as second grade, indicating that they are bringing an awareness of text structures to writing. Five features showed significant development from second to sixth grade.

Significant correlations between feature use and comprehension suggest that students who were better comprehenders also used more features in their writing, particularly in narrative discourse.

Students appear to be better writers of expository than narrative prose. Further research to explore features in students' writing and suggestions for classroom practice to enhance writing performance were discussed.

RELATING READING AND WRITING: DEVELOPING A TRANSACTIONAL THEORY OF THE WRITING PROCESS

Order No. 8200866

SHANKLIN, NANCY KATHERINE LEAVITT, ED.D. *Indiana University*, 1981. 285pp. Chairperson: Dr. Robert F. Carey

The purpose of this study was to examine anew the relationships between the reading and writing processes in light of recent socio-psycholinguistic language research. To do so, the study proposes a new theory of the writing process using schema-theoretic views of reading (Goodman, 1978; Adams & Collins, 1979; Eco, 1979; de Beaugrande, 1978, 1980) as a metaphor (Black, 1962). More specifically, the study develops a theory of writing that (1) views writing as a constructive mental process, (2) views error as evidence of processing, (3) considers whether processing strategies important in reading and internal to the process also exist in writing, (4) examines the reading process as it operates within the writing process, and (5) explains the writing process at all developmental levels. The new theory defines writing as a transactional process of progressive refinement that occurs over time and results in a graphic display for which a possible text world model can be constructed. From this perspective the new theory views reading and writing not as opposite processes but as alternate communication systems sharing numerous likenesses consistent with a holistic view of language.

The new theory is critiqued using criteria developed by Hawes (1975) and Steiner (1977) and is found to correspond well with findings from recent process studies of writing (Sommers, 1978; Pianko, 1979; Perl, 1979; Flowers & Hayes, 1977, 1980; Graves et al. 1979, 1980, 1981; Matsunashi, 1981). The case is made that the new theory can be further developed only if examined from constructivist and ethnographic perspectives. Instructional implications of the new theory are explicated in light of new relationships the theory suggests exist between the reading and writing processes.

ORAL LANGUAGE AND WRITTEN TEXT PRESENTATIONS: A COMPARISON OF EFFECTIVENESS

Order No. DA8201006

SIMPSON, MICHELE LEAH, ED.D. *Arizona State University*, 1981. 175pp.

The general purpose of this study was to extend the research knowledge on the effectiveness of learning through the differential modes of written text and spontaneous oral language. The specific purpose was to determine what relationship exists between varying levels of reading competency and the differential modes of content presentation and whether these variables have any effect on immediate and delayed learning. The design used was a 4 x 3 factorial with repeated measures. The two independent variables were modes of presentation and reading levels or reading competency. The dependent variable was achievement on a researcher-constructed test over the content of the four differential modes of presentation which was assessed at two different points in time.

Subjects were 192 tenth graders stratified according to reading competency and then randomly assigned in equal numbers to one of four treatment conditions: (a) listening to a lecture, (b) listening to an audio tape of that lecture, (c) reading a written text which was equivalent in content and superstructure to the oral language presentations, (d) reading a written text with the focused ideas that were stressed in the lecture presentation cued by underlining and capitalization. After the experimental conditions, the subjects were administered a 30-item multiple-choice test to measure learning. One week later, all the subjects were readministered the same test.

The listening presentation was a 14-minute lecture and the audio tape presentation was a tape of that experimental condition. The two reading presentations were developed from the lecture presentation via a six-stage process to avoid the artificiality of a word-for-word transcription representing the written text. Equivalency between the listening and written text presentations was established using a formal system of prose analysis. The cued reading presentation was developed with a simplified prosadic analysis of the lecture.

Results from the study indicated the four presentation modes had no differential effects on immediate or delayed tests of learning. Reading competency, however, did effect the scores in that good comprehenders across all four presentation modes performed better on both the immediate and delayed tests of learning than either the average or low comprehenders.

AN INVESTIGATION OF SYNTACTIC MATURITY IN READING COMPREHENSION AND WRITING ABILITY

Order No. 8202269

STILLEY, MARY JANE, PH.D. *University of Pittsburgh*, 1981. 132pp.

This study was designed to investigate the role of syntax in reading comprehension and in writing ability. Students' performances on three types of measures of reading comprehension, (1) a global test, (2) a cloze test, and (3) a sentence similarities test, were examined. Performances on each measure of comprehension were then compared with three measures of writing ability: (1) quality of students' writing, (2) syntactic maturity of students' written language, (3) students' syntactic competence.

Subjects for this study were 149 seventh grade students enrolled in an urban school district in western Pennsylvania. Measurement instruments were administered by classroom teachers over a two-week period of time. Reading comprehension was measured by a subtest of the *Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests*, two 50-item cloze passages, and a subtest of the *Test of Reading Comprehension*. Writing ability was analyzed on the basis of a holistic evaluation of a writing sample to determine quality and a T-unit analysis of a writing sample to assess syntactic maturity. Scores from the *Precision Transformations Test* were used as the measure of syntactic competence.

Pearson product-moment correlational analysis indicated the following: (1) There is a moderate relationship between reading comprehension as measured by a global test of reading comprehension and writing ability. (2) There is a moderate relationship between reading comprehension as measured by a cloze test and writing ability. (3) There is a moderate relationship between reading comprehension as measured by a sentence similarities test and writing ability. (4) There are moderate relationships among the various measures of reading comprehension. (5) There are low to moderate relationships among the various measures of writing ability.

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were reached: (1) While the data indicated that there is a relationship between reading comprehension and writing ability, that relationship is not especially strong. This finding suggests that knowledge of syntax is only one aspect of the reading process, therefore, sentence-manipulation activities, designed to enhance reading comprehension, may effect comprehension in a limited way. (2) While some researchers have proposed that a cloze test of reading comprehension may be more sensitive to syntactic maturity, the results of this study did not support that hypothesis. Recommendations were suggested that might increase the validity of a cloze test as a measure of syntactic maturity. (3) While all poor readers were also poor writers, all good readers were not good writers. It was therefore suggested that while reading and writing seem to have common underlying processes, there are also differences that need to be kept in mind.

THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG CHILDREN'S AWARENESS OF THE FUNCTION OF WRITING, COGNITIVE LEVELS, AND READINESS TO READ

Order No. 8127806

TAYLOR, EDYTHE WAYBRIGHT, ED.D. *West Virginia University*, 1981. 114pp.

Writing awareness as a communication skill is examined as a possible precursor of production of meaningful graphics, the decoding of print, and the performance of classification tasks. Eighty subjects, forty males and forty females, ranging in age from two-years-four-months to six-years-four-months, were tested using the *Writing Awareness Test*, the *Spache Diagnostic Reading Scales*, and Piagetian-like classification tasks. Subjects were asked to produce writing to determine whether an understanding of the purpose and function of writing precedes the production of meaningful graphics. Educational levels of maternal parents were noted as a possible factor in the S's ability to perform these tasks. Results show that children who understood that writing is a communication skill also scored higher on the Piagetian-like classification tasks, produced meaningful graphics, and had learned to decode and comprehend print. Educational levels of maternal parents of these S's were not significantly related to performance.

A COMPARISON OF THE READING COMPREHENSION AND WRITTEN COMPOSITION OF REFLECTIVE/IMPULSIVE FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS

Order No. 8124319

WILLIAMS-YOUNG, LOIS CATHERINE, ED.D. *Hofstra University*, 1981. 78pp.

The major purpose of this study was to compare the reading comprehension and written composition of Reflective/Impulsive cognitive style fourth grade children. The theoretical framework was founded on a cognitive-developmental concept of the communication skills of fourth grade children in the concrete operational stage.

The fifty subjects were fourth grade children enrolled in four classes in two public elementary schools. The school population was composed of approximately eighty-five percent Black, twelve percent with Spanish surnames, and three percent White. The highest percentage of students were from upper-lower and lower-middle socioeconomic classes.

The Diederich Analytic Scale was applied by four classroom teachers and the researcher to evaluate the written compositions for the qualities of General Merit and the variables of ideas, organization, wording, and flavor. The Matching Familiar Figures Test scores from the double median split procedure identified twenty-four subjects as Impulsive and twenty-six subjects as Reflective. Reading performance was measured by the comprehension subtest scores on the Metropolitan Achievement Test.

Five null hypotheses were examined by t-tests. Pearson's correlation and a canonical discriminate function analysis were used to test a sixth null hypothesis. All differences measured were considered significant if they were equal to or exceeded the .05 level of confidence.

Statistical findings included: (1) Reflective children performed significantly different from Impulsive children on reading comprehension; (2) Reflective children performed significantly different from Impulsive children in writing ability; (3) Reflective children did not perform significantly different on reading comprehension when compared with their writing ability; (4) Impulsive children did not perform significantly different on reading comprehension when compared with their writing ability; (5) Reflective children peformed significantly different from impulsive children on the writing variables of ideas, organization, wording, and flavor; (6) There was a significant correlation ($p. < .0001$) between the Reflective/Impulsive cognitive styles and the writing variables of ideas, organization, wording, and flavor; and (7) A combination of a writing variables, such as ideas, organization, and flavor, or a combination of ideas and organization significantly predicted the Reflective/Impulsive cognitive styles for eighty-four percent of the subjects.

Conclusions based on the findings included: (1) Reflective/Impulsive cognitive styles differentiated performance in reading comprehension; (2) Reflective/Impulsive cognitive styles differentiated performance in written composition; (3) Fourth graders identified as Reflective/Impulsive cognitive styles performed consistently within groups on reading comprehension and written composition; (4) Reflective/Impulsive cognitive style children performed significantly different on the writing variables of organization and flavor; and (5) A combination of the writing variables of ideas, organization, and flavor, or a combination of ideas and organization, will predict the Reflective/Impulsive cognitive styles.